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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ZAGREB 001026

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FOR EUR/SCE AND EUR/RPM; NSC FOR BRAUN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [HR](#) [SR](#) [BK](#)

SUBJECT: LUNCHEON WITH PRESIDENT MESIC TO DISCUSS BALKAN  
CRISES

Classified By: Amb. Robert Bradtke, Reasons 1.4 (B/D)

SUMMARY

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¶1. (C) President Mesic, accompanied by his foreign policy advisors Budimir Loncar and Tomislav Jakic, hosted Ambassador Bradtke and POL chief for lunch on November 20. The discussion focused on Loncar's meeting with Serbian President Tadic in Belgrade on November 14. Tadic had floated a proposal that Kosovo could declare "independence" without assuming "international sovereignty." Sovereignty would be de facto "transferred" to the EU. The Ambassador expressed skepticism about Tadic's ideas, and the Croatians did not push them. On Bosnia, Tadic told Loncar he supported B-H's integrity and opposed Dodik's actions, but urged caution in dealing with him. Mesic reiterated his position that a "third entity" in B-H was unacceptable. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Loncar said that Tadic described the next two months as critical, and that the current political situation in Serbia was relatively favorable, with 68 percent of the population supporting Serbia's Euro-Atlantic integration, which Tadic interpreted as support for his own strategic goals. Tadic told Loncar that his strategy was to push for presidential elections in December, and then leverage his victory there to force parliamentary elections in 2009 that could marginalize Kostunica. This calendar, however, meant that Tadic was concerned with the tempo of the Kosovo debate, and Tadic was seeking Mesic's more active engagement in the Kosovo debate.

KOSOVO

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¶3. (C) According to Loncar, Tadic said he understood that Kosovo was lost to Serbia, and that Kosovo's move toward independence was "irreversible." But he hoped that such independence could be managed in a process that would be synchronized with Serbia's own progress toward Euro-Atlantic institutions. Tadic claimed such a solution could be pursued on the basis of UNSCR 1244. Kosovo would declare "independence", but not immediately assume "international sovereignty". De jure sovereignty would nominally remain with Serbia, while de facto this sovereignty would be "transferred" to the EU. As Loncar understood Tadic's proposal, there would then be a new UNSCR to replace Annex 2 of the current arrangements. Kosovo would be able to receive foreign diplomatic missions, but they would be accredited to the government, not the President. Over time, Kosovo would become fully sovereign in tandem with both countries joining the EU. Tadic said Kostunica would oppose this proposal, but if the Russians accepted the approach at the UNSC, then Kostunica would be unable to stop it.

¶4. (C) Tadic also queried Loncar on Croatia's perception of the Russians, and how hard-line Moscow would be over Kosovo. Tadic told Loncar that he was uncertain of what Russia's real objectives were, and feared that Russia might even push the Kosovo issue harder than Serbia for ulterior reasons. Tadic reportedly said he feared that Serbia would not be able to extricate itself from Russia's embrace, and that this bond would destroy Tadic's own political strategy of moving Serbia closer to the West. Loncar did not report on what he may have told Tadic, but President Mesic commented that his own personal view was that Kostunica had a firm guarantee from the Russians that they would not abandon him in the UNSC.

¶5. (C) Ambassador Bradtke told Mesic and Loncar that he would report back to Washington, but expressed skepticism that Tadic's proposal was serious or that it could work. It appeared to be a move to prolong the negotiations and delay final status. (COMMENT: Loncar, who presumably had talked Mesic into presenting Tadic's ideas to the US, seemed a bit uncomfortable to receive such a negative initial reaction. But Mesic made no effort to sell the alleged Tadic initiative, and acknowledged that Tadic had not delivered on earlier promises to produce a more reasonable Serbian approach, and had instead supported unhelpful steps such as the Serb boycott of Kosovar elections. END COMMENT.)

#### BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

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¶6. (C) On Bosnia, Loncar reported that Tadic saw the situation as "explosive" and insisted that Dodik was receiving neither inspiration nor support from Tadic's party in Belgrade. Tadic said Dodik was inspired by his own

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personal interest in maintaining political influence among Bosnia's Serbs. Tadic noted his support for BiH's integrity and opposition to any referendum in the RS. Tadic urged, however, that Lajcak back off his October 19 measures, fearing that if Dodik were forced out, whoever came after him would be worse. Mesic was not advocating Tadic's views, but did back off his past suggestions that Lajcak sack both Dodik and Silajdzic (reftel), suggesting that Dodik could only be removed if he were first "discredited" within his own community.

¶7. (C) In discussing the status of Bosnia's Croats, Mesic repeated to the Ambassador his long standing view that he could not accept a third entity. The only solution he could accept in B-H would be the creation of cantons, the majority of which should not have a dominant ethnic group. Mesic criticized the HDZ for silently supporting the positions favoring a third entity taken by its fragmented sister parties in BiH. Mesic also criticized the fact that Bosnian Croats could vote in Croatian elections, noting that it creates divided loyalties, and damages politics in both Croatia and B-H. After the upcoming parliamentary elections on November 25, he said, Croatia would take steps to abolish the diaspora voting. In a more speculative vein, Mesic noted that, if the RS declared independence or joined Serbia, then Croatia would not be able to just stand on the sidelines. It would be a disaster for Croatia to see the RS break off, so Croatia would have to help the Bosnians to cut the Brcko corridor.  
BRADTKE